

## FEATURE OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN THE REGION OF ELBASAN

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### Abstract:

Elbasan's region during the 30s of the twentieth century was involved by spreading the wave of communist and fascist doctrines. Fascist doctrine did not find sufficient conditions for spreading them, because it considered, during the Second World War, by the Albanian people, as a doctrine that came along with the Italian invaders with expansionist goals to state. While the Communist movement, although in Albania spread later than in other European countries, found the ground and spread by having a significant impact on subsequent historical developments in the region of Elbasan. In the performance of the communist movement in the region of Elbasan influenced several important factors. Political, social and economic factors were among the major who had an impact on the spread of communist ideas with them and the movement that carried these ideas. Elbasan's women have played an important role in the national liberation struggle. Their contribution has been not only the distribution of tracts, to aid in the collection of weapons, munitions, but also to accommodate the young ones putting their lives at risk to national and social liberation. The resistance of these women and girls was the most different forms. In the city of Elbasan were engaged a considerable number of women and girls as participating in this war. Among the first activists were Persefoni Todri, Virgjini Bishka, etc. Their activity extended among the students of Pedagogical, the factory workers 'SAIDE', and the tobacco factory. They stood strong with the heroism of self-denial by continuing their fight right to protect the homeland and their rights to social emancipation. Example of women and girls of the city of Elbasan clearly showed that the role of Albanian women and mothers in the fight for national liberation was quite large.

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### I.

The period between two world wars in the history of Europe considered as a period of political domination of this continent by groups or parties of extreme left and right, respectively, communist and fascist. Elbasan region was involved by spreading the wave of communist and fascist doctrines. Fascist doctrine did not find sufficient conditions for spreading them, because it considered, during the war by the Albanian people, as a doctrine that came along with the Italian invaders with expansionist goals to state. While the Communist movement, although in Albania spread later than in other European countries, found the

ground and spread by having a significant impact on subsequent historical developments in the region of Elbasan.

One of the factors that influenced the spread of communist movement in Elbasan was the role of representatives of Albanian immigration in European countries. After 1925 years, a considerable part of immigration policy in Europe held stance against Zogut, openly opposed him and the policies pursued by him in governing the state. In the political activities of Albanian immigration in Europe was evident that some elements in their political activity had anti-government attitudes and promoted communist ideas.<sup>112</sup> Halim Xhelo and Ali Kelmendi were among the leading representatives of political emigration that carried such attitudes. Under the influence of these elements communist, a part of Albanian immigrants supported the political ideas that promoted the spread of communism. In 1927 from the Soviet Union returned to the city of Elbasan Demir Godelli and Fetah Ekmekçiun, after the amnesty declared by President Zog. In collaboration with Ali Kelmendi, and with the support of Ali Myftiu and Mahmud Bedallit in city of Elbasan, they developed in the region of Elbasan an activity in creating the conditions in the organization of a wider communist movement.<sup>113</sup> Initially, activities were propaganda aiming at translating and distributing communist literature. They offer the people of Elbasan, as opportunity outlet from the difficult economic and political situation, the communist doctrine, with its elements of propaganda such as economic equality, social equality, etc. One of the activists was one of the representatives of economic immigration to France, Fetah Ekmekçiu, who had worked before returning to Elbasan in 1927, in St. Etienne, France where he had witnessed political clashes in avoiding the risk of establishing a fascist regime.<sup>114</sup>

Socio-economic factors had an impact on the spread of the communist movement. In the economic sphere, the region of Elbasan was not distinguished for an overall economic development of the more industrial. Agriculture in the region of Elbasan, as branches of the economy was backward. In comparison

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<sup>112</sup> Akademia e Shkencave : Historia e Popullit Shqiptar, vëll.III, Toena, Tiranë 2007, fq.319

<sup>113</sup> Petro Kita: *Elbasani në luftën për çlirim*, Tiranë 1971, fq.65

<sup>114</sup> Yje të pashuar, vëll.III, Tiranë 1972, fq.243

with other regions of the country, the presence of field area in this region provide many opportunities of agricultural production, however, production levels remain very low. Agriculture was backward, because for working agricultural lands used very primitive tools. Lands were owned by wealthy families in the region of Elbasan, as Vërlacët, Karaosmanët, Biçakçijtë, Hostopallët etc. These families, since the XIX century, owned about 4700 acres of land, which had accumulated the land by inheritance, or land of kidnapping villagers because of debts that they had not paid.<sup>115</sup> Many villagers had little land or in its absence, to provide means of livelihood, forced labor in the lands of these feudal families. Cooperation during the invasion of some families, land owners, with the invaders, as Vërlacët, Biçakçijtë, communist element encouraged to increase their nationalist propaganda for national liberation, social and economic equality among the poor peasantry. In terms of industrial development, except workshops of craftsmen here in town were erected some factories, such as cigarette "SAIDE" with 40-50 workers, "STABLES", which together contain a number of workers who were in a minority of the peasantry who constitute the majority.<sup>116</sup> Economic backwardness, especially the lack of entrepreneurial activities in industry, identified the inadequacy of the economy as a factor that delayed the initiation and development of the communist movement in the region of Elbasan. In enterprises set up as a cigarette factory, the workers, including women and girls of the city of Elbasan, had to work 12 hours a day for a very low fee. There were no trade union organizations in the city, as established in Western Europe, to protect the rights of employees. Workers had no right to social security, were deprived of any compensation if they suffer an accident, there was condoned discrimination in wage differentiation based on age and gender. First elements of propaganda of the Communist movement, took place among the workers of these enterprises established in the city of Elbasan. Do realization of sustainable economic demands of workers made individually or collectively were the impetus to their involvement in the communist movement. Entrepreneurs do not agree to pursue the continuing economic demands of workers made individually or collectively,

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<sup>115</sup> Shyqyri Demiri: *"Histori e shkurtër e trevës së Elbasanit"*, Tiranë 2006, fq.144

<sup>116</sup> Elbasani-Enciklopedi, Sejko, Elbasan 2003 fq.491,511

and this was one of the reasons for their involvement in the communist movement. In terms of social composition, the majority of the population in the region of Elbasan consisted of villagers, most of which was in a very difficult economic situation due to exploitation by the landowners to remain representative of the backward feudal relations in Albania. The spread of the communist movement faced many difficulties in rural areas for the following reasons:

- existence of feudal relations
- conservative attitudes of the rural population towards the new developments in ideological and political plan.
- low educational level of this population.

However, communist movement will extend to rural areas, at a later stage, when the interests of national liberation accompanied by pragmatism of the communist ideology as the only progressive movement.

Level of education was another important factor. About 85% of Albania's population, according to official statistics of 1927, was illiterate.<sup>117</sup> Elbasan's Prefecture in 1927 had a total of 28 schools of these was a high school, 27 elementary schools with about 1500 students which reflects the low level of education of the population. This condition made it difficult to spread the communist movement, particularly the press propaganda, aimed at the indoctrination of the population in the region of Elbasan with communist ideas. Besides the low educational level of population there were problems related to religious fanaticism, the position of women in society, lack of effort for their emancipation, which will encourage the participation of women and girls as active part of the communist movement and the antifascist national liberation war.<sup>118</sup> Representatives of the Communist movement in Elbasan became young men and women, who were educated and they were able recognition of communist ideas propagated within the country by communist groups. Communist groups established in Albania during the years 1930 – 1940. Such were the communist

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<sup>117</sup> Teki Selenica: "Shqipria në vitin 1927", Tiranë 1928, fq.251

<sup>118</sup> Mynever Zaimi: "*Përplasje ndër vite*", Tiranë 1998, fq.85

group of Korca, the communist group of Shkodra, which later created and their branches in the region of Elbasan. Pedagogical students in the city of Elbasan or students of the Lyceum of Korça had it easier to find and translate literature with Communist ideological content. Ptoleme Xhuvani, Bardhyl Popa, had contact with communist ideas in Lyceum of Korca and they had educational and cultural level, to be aware about what they were supporting and what they represent in the future. A part of young people who in childhood used to heavy work had supported the communist movement, being more preoccupied about changing the status of their economic difficulties, to liberate the nation from invaders than for carrying the movement ideology. In this group of young men included: Xhaferr Hakani -servant, Kadri Hyshmeri-prentice, Todri Jani -prentice, etc.

Political events in Albania served as a catalyst in accelerating the process of spreading the communist movement in the region of Elbasan. Invasion of Albania on 7 April 1939 after the departure of King Zog from Albania marks the beginning of a resistance of the Albanian people against fascist invaders. In its beginnings this resistance was spontaneous, unorganized. The resistance of the Albanian people by the year 1941 led by national ideals in the fight against foreign invaders. On April 7, 1939 all the people of the city of Elbasan, school students, merchants, craftsmen, etc. protested by a demonstration against the occupation of Albania. The efforts of communist elements to establish the full impact of these movements did not succeed initially. Presence in Albania of some communist groups and rivalry between them constitute the main reason for the slow spread of the communist movement. After creation of the Albanian Communist Party, in Elbasan began to grow gradually influence communist elements in the anti-fascist movement. That for these reasons:

- Communists in the fight against the invaders were determined.
- The political program of the Communist Party expressed for national liberation and the establishment of a democratic order.
- Communists, until in 1943, collaborated with nationalist groups.

During the years 1939-1943 outlined its nationalist character of the war, aimed at liberating the country and establishing a democratic order, and by the end of 1943-1944 as much as the Communists were dedicated liberation of the country, were dedicated and installation of communist dictatorship.

## II.

In the anti-fascist activity with groups of young people joined the many women and girls of the city of Elbasan. The resistance of these women and girls was the most different forms.

- For their organization, which became possible not only the city but also in the village.
- For education, as almost the majority of women and girls were illiterate.

Elbasan women have had an important role in the national liberation struggle. Their contribution has been not only the distribution of tracts, to aid in the collection of weapons, ammunition, clothing, food, cash, but also to accommodate the young ones putting their lives at risk just to national and social liberation. Aspasi Naska, Hatixhe Misiri, Mili Bahja, Shahe Vyshka, Fatime Roseni, Fani Robja, Shergushe Bebeti, Efrosina Dodbiba distinguished themselves for their patriotic and progressive feelings. High school students take various actions against the fascist politics. Liri Hakani, Aleksandra Mano, Sava Kavaja, Haxhire Myzyri, have helped to distribute tracts at school and that young people not wearing fascist uniforms. In high school, students read various tracts of discussing them, writing on walls slogans against the invaders, boycotting classes etc. Pedagogical school council took sanctions for those students who had been participating in these activities, where a part of students expelled and another forced to leave school for a month. Mynever Zaimi, Aleksandra Mano condemned to stay away from school for a month.<sup>119</sup> Propaganda tool used by these women and girls was secretly distribute the tracts, which in their content, opposed the fascist politics. Flutura Misiri, 14 years old girl, took over to help her brother, Sule

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<sup>119</sup> Mynever Zaimi: "*Përplasje ndër vite*", Tiranë 1998, fq. 90

Misiri, for distributing tracts in the city. She arrested by Fascist soldiers but bravely resisted the beatings and threats. Vule Dylgjeri promptly implemented last trust of her brother, Syrja Dylgjeri, for concealing and sending tracts to the right place, denying her relationship with him in the face of fascists.<sup>120</sup> Women's participation in demonstrations against the fascist invaders was another form of anti-fascist resistance. In August 1942, the Italian authorities in the city intensified economic pressure, persecution, arrests, imprisonment of activists of the anti-fascist war. The people of this city was found itself in a difficult economic situation in the absence of bread, was organized in a powerful demonstration against economic exploitation and against the repressive measures taken by foreign invaders. In the front row of demonstrators were women and girls as Mynever Zaimi, Haxhire Myzyri, Mexhite Hoxha, Aleksandra Mano with slogans in their hands approached the city center. In this demonstration were arrested 29 persons, among whom two women, Haxhire Myzyri, Mynever Zaimi. Fascist authorities used violence against the detainees being beaten and tortured, in order to find the organizers of the strike. Even after release from prison, their activity did not stop but continued with other means and forms. Haxhire Myzyri after her release activated in the Çermenikës partisan group, which fought bravely in the ranks of the battalion. Haxhireja was one of the first initiators and activists among women in the city of Elbasan, who fought with courage in the struggle against the Italian invaders. Together with his brother, Abdul Myzyrin, she killed in December of 1943, becoming one of the first martyrs of the city of Elbasan in the war against fascist invaders. Other means of resistance used by high school students were also cultural and artistic activities. Staging of the play "The triumph of freedom" in December-January of the years 1942 -1943 was a significant action. This drama had an impact on people, raising his morale and the role of women in society at that time. Participation of women and girls of the city of Elbasan, in the fight against invaders, encountering many obstacles and difficulties, it is because of the existence of old concepts and mentalities,

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<sup>120</sup> Yje të pashuar, vëll.III,Tiranë 1972, fq. 414.

patriarchal and conservative. Despite the difficult conditions of repression to the denial of their rights, women and girls have been factor in the progress and emancipation. These girls and women had to fight not only against the propaganda of the Nazi-fascists policy, but also against difficulties derived from their own families and from the opinion of the city and society in general. A 14 years old girl went to the mountain to partisan groups on the day of her marriage, while parents are getting married to a man much older than their daughter, only for economic reasons. At a meeting held on February 24, 1943 at the house of Ruzhdie Sejдини were set up groupings of women and girls in developing anti-fascist activities. Educational groups created for women and girls were composed of 7 to 10 people. The initiators of these groups were Hyqmete Konica, Fatime Misiri, Vanthi Peçini, Persefoni Todri, Virgjini Bishka, Shegushe Haxhimusaj, Liri Hakani etc<sup>121</sup>. Activity and participation of these women has further extended in May 1943 across the city. Every neighborhood in the city was set up anti-fascist council of women. In the neighborhood "Kala" council headed by Sina Shuteriqi, Fani Robja, Sofia Papamihali , in the neighborhood "Dylgjerhysen" council headed by Fatushe Cerma, Shegushe Abdihoxxha, in the neighborhood "Shinkoll" council headed by Vanthi Pecini, Polikseni Kalefi, in the neighborhood "Sulejmanie" council headed by Naxhije Gjerga, Hamide Rroseni etc.<sup>122</sup>

Women and girls stood with heroism and selflessness while continuing their fight right to homeland defense, in defense of their rights to social emancipation. The contribution of women and girls of the city proved that the role of Albanian women in the fight for national liberation was very important.

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<sup>121</sup> Mynever Zaimi: *"Përplasje ndër vite"*, Tiranë 1998, fq .91

<sup>122</sup> P.Kita: *Elbasani në luftën për çlirim*, Tiranë 1971, fq.231



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